

Message Text

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TAGS: PARM, US, USSR

SUBJECT: US-USSR WORKING GROUP ON RADIOLOGICAL WEAPONS (RW)

GENEVA FOR CCD DEL

STATE RW MESSAGE NO. 9

1. TEXT OF STORY CARRIED BY TASS ENGLISH SERVICE IS
PROVIDED FOR YOUR BACKGROUND INFORMATION:
WASHINGTON, MARCH 16, TASS-THE PENTAGON DECIDED TO START
MASS PRODUCTION OF A NEW TYPE OF ARMAMENTS, HOLLOW-CHARGE
PROJECTILES.FROM REPROCESSED URANIUM. IT IS PLANNED TO
MANUFACTURE 730 THOUSAND SUCH PROJECTILES FOR THE U.S.
ARMY BEGINNING WITH JANUARY OF NEXT YEAR. THE PRODUCTION
OF 250 THOUSAND URANIUM PROJECTILES IS PLANNED TO BE
STARTED FOR THE NAVY ALREADY THIS YEAR SO AS TO SUPPLY
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WITH THEM ALL U.S. AIRCRAFT CARRIERS, CRUISERS AND
DESTROYERS.

THE NEWSPAPER WASHINGTON STAR REPORTS THAT SEVEN
MILLION DOLLARS WAS ALREADY SPENT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT
OF THE NEW TYPE OF WEAPONS. QUOTING EXPERTS, THE NEWSPAPER
REPORTS THAT URANIUM PROJECTILES HAVE A HIGH LEVEL OF

KINETIC ENERGY AND ARMOUR-PIERCING ABILITY AND CAN ALSO BE USED AS AN ANTI-MISSILE WEAPON.

DESPITE THE PENTAGON'S ASSURANCES THAT THE RADIATION LEVEL OF URANIUM PROJECTILES IS RELATIVELY LOW, EXPERTS STATED THAT IT IS HIGH ENOUGH FOR THESE PROJECTILES TO BE CLASSED AS A NEW RADIOLOGICAL WEAPON.

2. PHRASE "REPROCESSED URANIUM" EVIDENTLY IS GARBLED TRANSLATION FROM ORIGINAL "DEPLETED URANIUM."

3. REFERENCED WASHINGTON STAR ARTICLE WAS WRITTEN BY COX NEWSPAPER CORRESPONDENT JOSEPH ALBRIGHT AND APPEARED MARCH 14 UNDER HEADLINE, "US FINDS USE FOR DEPLETED URANIUM - BULLETS. TEXT FOLLOWS:

THE PENTAGON HAS FOUND A USE FOR ONE OF ITS MILDLY RADIOACTIVE NUCLEAR WASTE PRODUCTS: IT IS ABOUT TO MAKE ONE MILLION ARMOR-PIERCING BULLETS OUT OF DEPLETED URANIUM.

KNOWN AS "KINETIC ENERGY PENETRATORS," THE NEW URANIUM BULLETS ARE DESIGNED TO BURN HOLES THROUGH A FOOT OF STEEL ARMOR OR KNOCK ENEMY MISSILES OUT OF THE SKY.

DEPLETED URANIUM IS A WEAK SOURCE OF RADIOACTIVITY, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BUT THAT IT NOT WHY IT IS BEING USED IN BULLETS. ITS CHIEF ADVANTAGE, ACCORDING TO PENTAGON WEAPONS DESIGNERS, IS THAT IS EXTREMELY HEAVY AND CHEAP.

OFFICIALS ACKNOWLEDGE THEY COULD HAVE SUBSTITUTED A NON-RADIOACTIVE HEAVY METAL SUCH AS TUNGSTEN. BUT AS NAVY SPOKESPERSON SUE FILI EXPLAINED, "DEPLETED URANIUM IS PREFERRED BECAUSE IT IS AVAILABLE IN EXCESS AND IS THEREFORE INEXPENSIVE." TUNGSTEN HAS TO BE IMPORTED.

A SOLDIER INSIDE AN ARMY TANK ARMED WITH URANIUM BULLETS WILL BE EXPOSED TO AS MUCH AS TWO-TENTHS OF A MILLIREM OF GAMMA RADIATION EVERY HOUR, ACCORDING TO DARWIN TARAS, AN ARMY EXPERT ON DEPLETED URANIUM WEAPONS.

A FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION RADIATION AUTHORITY TOLD COX NEWSPAPERS THAT AT THIS MILLIREM DOSAGE, TANK CREWS WILL RECEIVE THE EQUIVALENT OF ONE WELL-ADMINISTERED CHEST X-RAY EVERY 20 TO 30 HOURS. THIS DOSAGE IS PERMISSIBLE BUT NOT DESIRABLE UNDER CURRENT RADIOLOGICAL HEALTH STANDARDS FOR CIVILIANS, ACCORDING TO A HALF-DOZEN RADIATION EXPERTS OUTSIDE THE PENTAGON.

THE DEPLETED URANIUM BULLETS GO INTO PRODUCTION AT A TIME WHEN CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES HAVE SHOWN INCREASING CONCERN ABOUT POSSIBLE LONG-RANGE CANCER AND BIRTH DEFECT RISKS FROM LOW-LEVEL RADIATION.

ONE OF THE ARMY TANK BULLETS IS ABOUT THE SIZE OF AN EXTRA-LARGE CIGAR AND WEIGHS UP TO EIGHT POUNDS. WHEN IT SLAMS INTO ITS TARGET, THE URANIUM CATCHES FIRE AND SEARS THROUGH STEEL LIKE A WHITE-HOT MAGNESIUM FLARE.

"THIS IS ONE ADVANTAGE OF USING URANIUM OVER TANGSTEN -IT GETS SO HOT THAT IT CAUSES ANY DIESEL FUEL VAPORS IN AN ENEMY TANK TO EXPLODE," SAID TARAS.
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IN ADDITION TO THE ARMY TANK SHELLS, THE NAVY IS IN THE FINAL STAGES OF DEVELOPING A RADAR-GUIDED GATLING GUN KNOWN AS THE PHALANX SYSTEM THAT WILL SPEW OUT BULLETS FASHIONED FROM SPENT URANIUM AT INCOMING MISSILES.

EACH OF THE NAVY'S BULLETS WILL BE ABOUT THE SIZE OF A 20-GAUGE SHOTGUN SHELL AND WILL CONTAIN THREE OUNCES OF URANIUM.

OFFICIALS SAID THE ARMY WILL BEGIN PRODUCING 730,000 OF THE URANIUM TANK BULLETS NEXT JANUARY, AS THE CULMINATION OF A \$7 MILLION RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECT. THE NAVY SAID IT PLANS TO PROCURE AT LEAST 250,000 OF THE BULLETS STARTING THIS YEAR SO IT CAN BEGIN INSTALLING PHALANX GATLING GUNS ON ALL ITS CARRIERS, CRUISERS AND DESTROYERS.

DEPLETED URANIUM IS THAT PORTION OF THE METAL LEFT BEHIND AFTER THE MORE VALUABLE U-235 ISOTOPE HAS BEEN EXTRACTED TO MAKE NUCLEAR FUEL RODS OR ATOMIC WEAPONS. DEPLETED URANIUM, WHICH IS THE SLIGHTLY HEAVIER AND MORE COMMON URANIUM ISOTOPE KNOWN AS U-238, CANNOT SUSTAIN A NUCLEAR CHAIN REACTION.

OFFICIALS IN THE ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT AGENCY SAID THE DEPLETED URANIUM BULLETS ARE NOT RADIOACTIVE ENOUGH TO BE CONSIDERED A "RADIOLOGICAL WEAPON." U.S. AND RUSSIAN NEGOTIATORS HAVE BEEN MEETING IN GENEVA TO SEEK A BAN ON RADIOLOGICAL MASS DESTRUCTION DEVICES.

ARMY OFFICIALS SAID A TEST FIRING AT ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND, MD., LAST YEAR LED MILITARY RESEARCHERS TO CON-
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CLUDE THAT "THE CHEMICAL AND RADIOLOGICAL EXPOSURE OF
CREW PERSONNEL UNDER ATTACK BY DEPLETED URANIUM MUNITION
WILL NOT HAMPER THE CREW'S ABILITY TO CONTINUE COMBAT

UNDER "WORST-CASE" CONDITIONS WHEN A TANK IS HIT BY A
DEPLETED URANIUM SHELL AND ITS FILTRATION SYSTEM FAILS,
ANY SURVIVING CREW MEMBERS WOULD RECEIVE ONLY ABOUT 250
MILLIREMS OF RADIATION, THE STUDY SAID. IT TAKES ABOUT
1,5000 TIMES AS MUCH RADIATION TO CAUSE RADIATION
SICKNESS.

THE STUDY WAS CONDUCTED IN PART TO SEE THAT WOULD
HAPPEN IF THE RUSSIANS SHOULD DEVELOP DEPLETED URANIUM
PROJECTILES TO SHOOT AT AMERICAN TANKS, OFFICIALS
SAID. VANCE

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